

Brookline Preservation Commission

Demolition Application Report

Address: 83 Longwood Avenue

Applicant: 83 Longwood Ave LLC

Building Type: Inn/Lodging House

National Register Listing (if Applicable): N/A



Historical/Architectural Significance:

83 Longwood Avenue was constructed sometime between 1874 and 1888 on a large lot of vacant land formally owned by the Stearns family. Charles Stearns, a farmer from Waltham, was living in Brookline by 1810, and for two generations, the Stearns family ran a market garden and later a nursery. It is possible the lot was subdivided as early as circa 1879, after the death of Charles Stearns, when his son, Charles Stearns Jr., began working in real estate and subdividing the family farm into parcels for development. The Stearns family, who resided nearby at the corner of Harvard and Beacon Street, continued to own the property at 83 Longwood Avenue until at least 1919, and rented out the dwelling.

In 1929, the Gordon family purchased the property and George Gordon resided in the house with his wife and daughter. Gordon was locally known as being the reverend of Old South Church in Boston from 1884 to 1927. The Gordon Chapel in Old South Church still exists in his memory. After reviewing his obituaries, Gordon himself only appears to have lived at 83 Longwood Avenue a very short time, as he died less than a year after the family moved to the property; though his wife and daughter continued to reside in the dwelling. Gordon's daughter Ruth is still listed as living in the dwelling in 1942, but had other occupants living with her.

The Sawabini family purchased the property in 1943 and in 1947 was granted a license from the town to operate the building as lodging house, in addition to it being their primary residence. While operating as the Longwood Guest House, Buehler Realty Trust took ownership in 1971 and in the early 1970s had planned to raze the building and construct a 42 unit apartment building in its place. However, according to a letter sent by them to abutters in 1976, the Trust had purchased the neighboring buildings at 73-75 Longwood Avenue and 109-111 Saint Paul Street, with intentions to construct a much larger building once possible. The Trust continued to operate the Longwood Guest House and in the early 1980s, they opted to change plans and convert the building into the Beech Tree Inn, which they then operated for forty years until it closed in the summer of 2020. The property was sold in November 2020 to 83 Longwood Ave LLC, who changed the use back to a lodging house and renamed it the Longwood Guest House.

The 19th century building has seen a number of changes throughout its history including the loss of its wood shingle roof, the construction of a two car basement garage in 1947, the installation of aluminum siding in 1959, and the extension and enclosing of an open front porch in 1965. Various smaller changes were made as the use of the building changed from single family to a lodging house. However, the single family nature of the façade was maintained.

In 1999 the front entry and porch was reconstructed and improved with a new roof which extended past the body of the building, which is similar to the footprint of the original entry. The building still retains its overall form and massing, siting, projecting bays on both sides, and decorative brackets above the left side two story bay.

While this area has evolved over the 20th century, the structure continues to stand as a memory of the vast number of single family residential dwellings that appear to have once lined this specific portion of Longwood Avenue, by the intersection of Saint Paul Street, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The building at 83 Longwood Avenue meets the following criteria for an initial determination of significance:

- c. The building is associated with one or more significant historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social history of the Town or Commonwealth;
- d. The building is historically or architecturally significant in terms of its period, style, method of construction, or its association with a significant architect or builder, either by itself or as part of a group of buildings.

The building at 83 Longwood Avenue retains integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and workmanship.



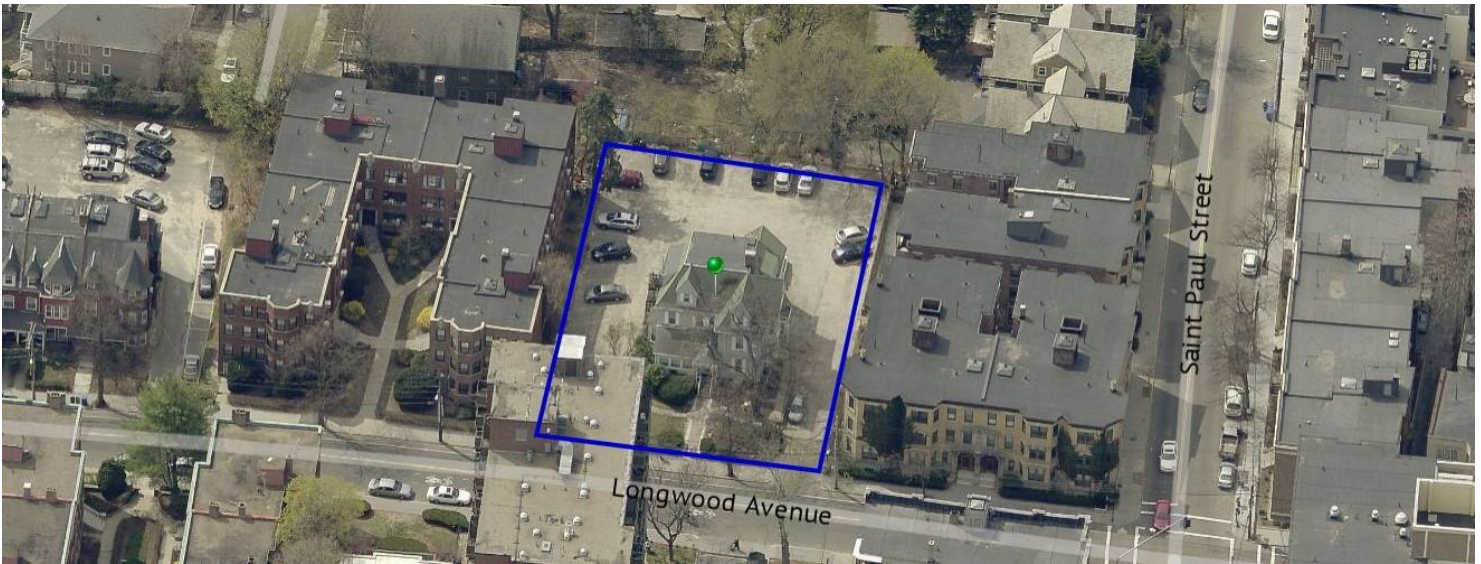
Aerial view of 83 Longwood Avenue, looking east.



Aerial view of 83 Longwood Avenue, looking north.



Aerial view of 83 Longwood Avenue, looking west.



Aerial view of 83 Longwood Avenue, looking south.



Photograph of the façade of 83 Longwood Avenue



Photograph of the façade of 83 Longwood Avenue



Photograph of the left side and front elevation of 83 Longwood Avenue



Photograph of the left side elevation of 83 Longwood Avenue



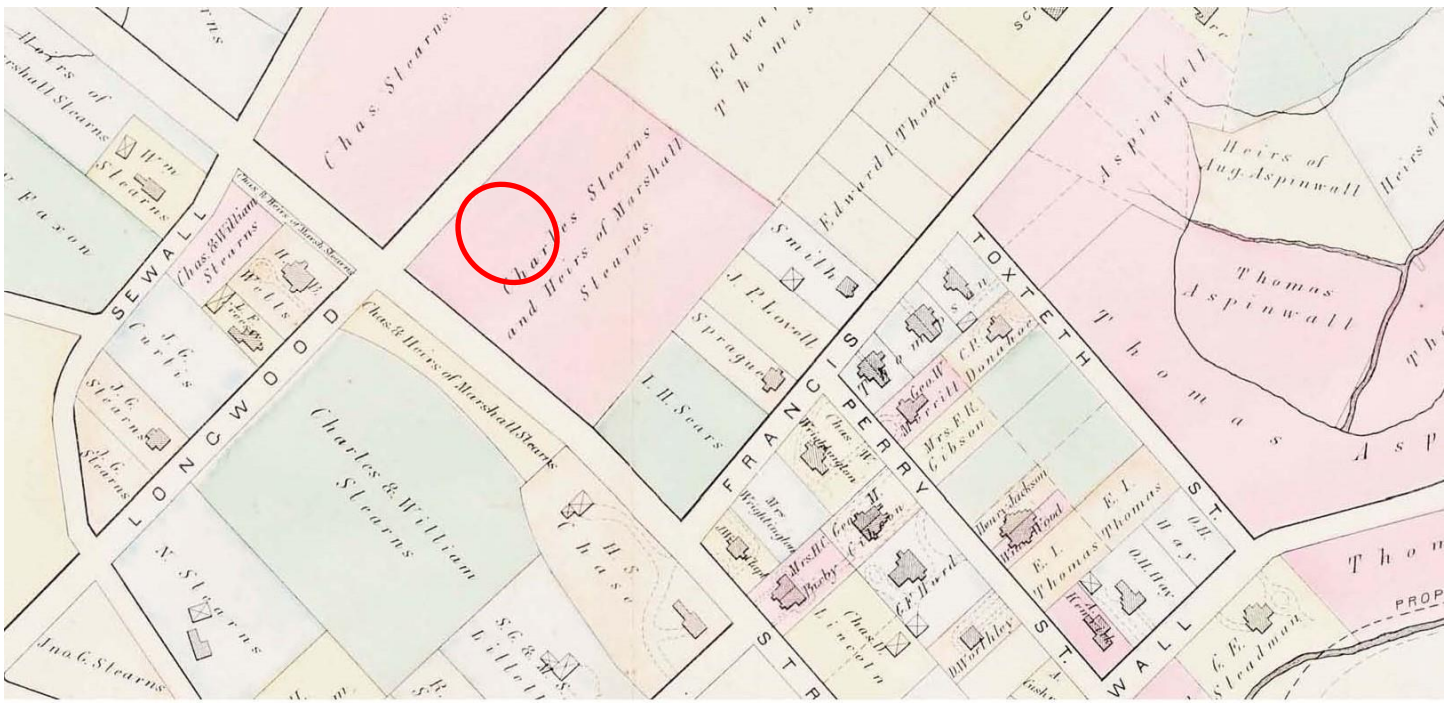
Photograph of the rear elevation of 83 Longwood Avenue



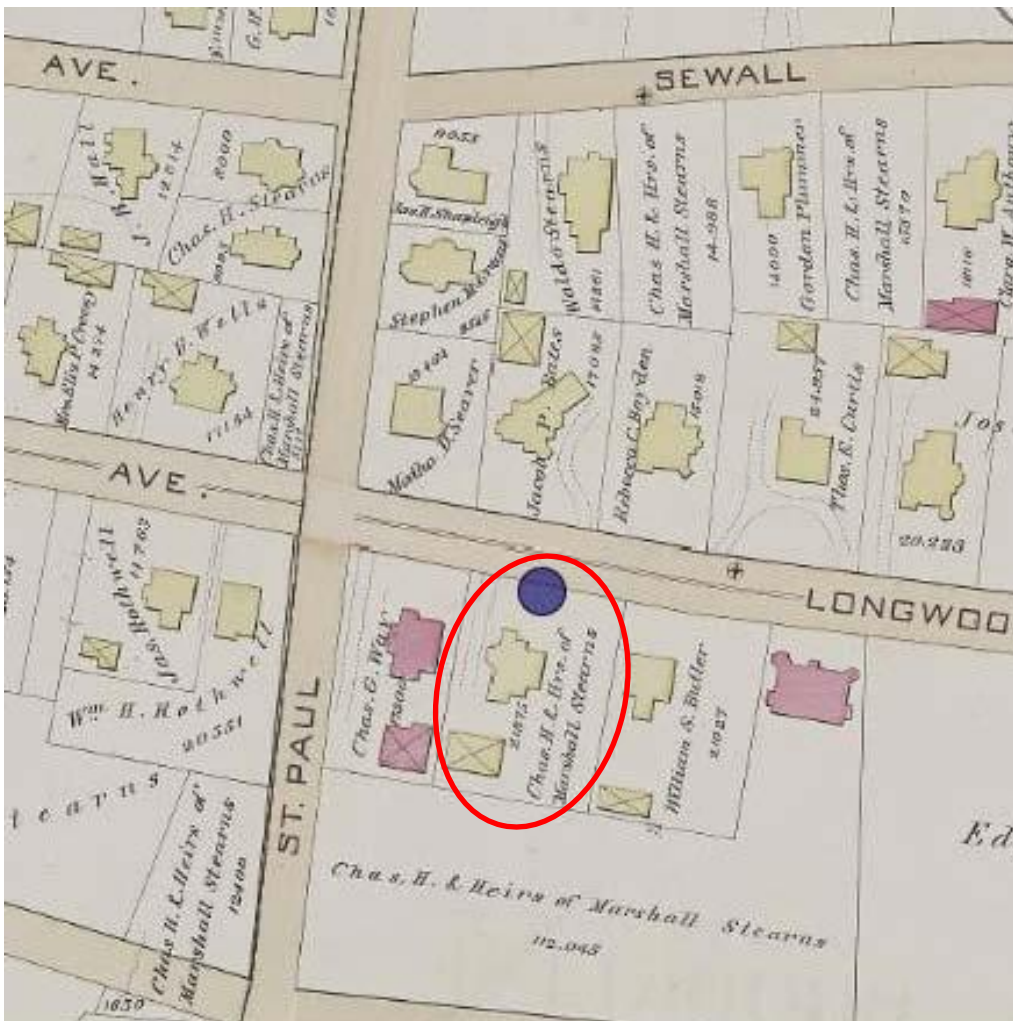
Photograph of the right side elevation of 83 Longwood Avenue



Photograph of the right side elevation of 83 Longwood Avenue



1874 Atlas



1888 Atlas



1913 Atlas